

REMARKS

At the outset, the Examiner is thanked for the review and consideration of the present application.

The Examiner's Office Action dated January 18, 2006 has been received and its contents reviewed. Claims 1-4 are pending for consideration, of which claim 1 is independent. Claims 5-6 have been withdrawn from consideration. By this Amendment, claim 1 has been amended.

Turning now to the detailed Office Action, claims 1 and 2 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as anticipated by Crocker et al. (U.S. Patent No. 406,886 – hereafter Crocker). Further, claims 3-4 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Crocker. In response to the rejections, Applicants have amended claim 1 above to further clarify the claim language and to distinguish the presently claimed invention over that of Crocker.

Applicants respectfully submit that Crocker teaches a digester having a shell a (i.e., cylindrical middle section), a top plate or head i^2 (i.e., a dome section), a sleeve n (i.e., a cylindrical gas discharge section), a short flanged tube or throat piece k (i.e., a cylindrical metallic reinforcing collar. As shown in, e.g., Fig. 1 of Crocker the head i^2 is bolted to the shell, and the short flanged tube is also secured to the top plate via bolts t' , sleeve n and cover t, as shown in Fig. 5.

On the other hand, present invention as recited in amended claim 1 includes, in combination with other features, a cylindrical metallic reinforcing collar fitted onto the cylindrical gas discharge section of the tank body and subsequently engaged integrally on the exterior of the tank body between the cylindrical gas discharge section and the dome section by shrink fitting, wherein the metallic tank body is formed by plastically deforming a hollow cylindrical blank of metal with rotation, and the dome section in the vicinity of the boundary of the cylindrical gas discharge section and the cylindrical gas discharge section are increased in thickness as compared with the cylindrical middle section. Applicants respectfully assert that Crocker fails to teach, disclose or suggest at least the amended features.

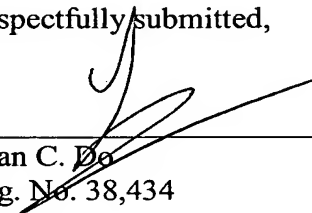
Consequently, since each and every feature of the present claims is not taught (and is not inherent) in the teachings of Crocker, as is required by MPEP Chapter 2131 in order to establish anticipation, the rejection of claims 1 and 2, under 35 U.S.C. §102(b), as anticipated by Crocker is improper.

The amendments and arguments set forth above in relation to the §102(b) rejection of claims 1 and 2 are also applicable to the obviousness rejection of claims 3-4.

In view of the amendment set for above and the remarks below, reconsideration and withdrawal of all the rejections are respectfully requested.

Having responded to the rejections set forth in the outstanding Office Action, it is submitted that claims 1-4 are in condition for allowance. An early and favorable Notice of Allowance is respectfully solicited. In the event that the Examiner is of the opinion that a brief telephone or personal interview will facilitate allowance of one or more of the above claims, the Examiner is courteously requested to contact Applicants' undersigned representative.

Respectfully submitted,



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